United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in Presidential statement, reiterates need to improve United Nations capacity for rapid deployment and reinforcement of peace-keeping operations; says lack of readily available equipment is major limiting factor.

+ General Assembly begins consideration of Agreement amending deep seabed mining provisions of Law of Sea Convention; United States says draft removes obstacles to widespread acceptance of Convention.

+ Secretary-General, in report to Security Council, says situation in Haiti has deteriorated as a result of actions by illegal government; cites human rights abuses following expulsion of MICIVIH and alarming humanitarian developments.

+ Special Representative Akashi requests meeting with Bosnian Serb leader amid growing tension in Bosnia; NATO aircraft provide show of force after UNPROFOR convoy hit by small arms fire.

+ Secretary-General asks UNDP Administrator to help ensure policy coherence and coordination in United Nations system; notes calls in Economic and Social Council debate for improvements in arenas of development and economic cooperation.

+ Kazakhstan signs safeguards agreement with IAEA relating to Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; Agency to verify peaceful use of country's nuclear facilities and materials.

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The Security Council today reiterated the importance of improving the United Nations capacity for rapid deployment and reinforcement of peace-keeping operations, saying recent history demonstrated that such an effort was essential. In a statement by its President, Jamsheed Marker (Pakistan), the Council noted that the lack of readily available equipment was a major limiting factor in the timely deployment of troops. It stressed the need to urgently address that issue in the context of stand-by arrangements

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and more broadly. The Council was responding to the Secretary-General's report of 30 June concerning standy-by arrangements for peace-keeping.

The Council expressed gratitude for the Secretary-General's efforts in respect of stand-by arrangements. It welcomed the responses received so far from Member States, and the Secretary-General's intention to maintain a comprehensive database of the offers made, including technical details. The Council noted his view that the commitments made did not yet adequately cover the resources needed for future peace-keeping operations. It also noted that additional commitments were expected from other Member States, and welcomed the Secretary-General's call for all to participate in the arrangements.

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The General Assembly today began consideration of a draft resolution by which it would adopt the Agreement on the implementation of the deep seabed mining provisions contained in Part XI of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. By the terms of the draft, the Agreement would be interpreted and applied together with Part XI of the Covention as a single instrument, and, in the event of an inconsistency between the two, the provisions of the Agreement would prevail. The Convention on the Law of the Sea is expected to enter into force on 16 November.

The United States representative said her country would sign the Agreement and would apply it provisionally, pending its entry into force. She noted that four years of consultations had resolved outstanding issues relating to deep seabed mining and removed obstacles to widespread acceptance of the Convention.

The Agreement was the product of informal consultations on resolving problems regarding deep seabed mining provisions that had prevented most industrialized countries from becoming parties to the Convention. The Convention, adopted by the 1982 Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, deals with the use of oceans, including national sovereignty, exploitation of economic resources, navigation, dispute settlement and jurisdiction over the resources of the deep seabed.

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The situation in Haiti has deteriorated in the last month as a result of actions taken by the illegal government of Emile Jonassaint, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report to the Security Council dated 26 July, he said human rights abuses had continued since the illegal expulsion of the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) on 5 July. Killings and assaults had been reported, and the locally recruited staff of international organizations were particularly sensitive to the continuing tension.

The Secretary-General described the humanitarian situation in the country as alarming, with the poorest sectors of the population suffering the most. Prices had risen sharply, the unemployment rate exceeded 50 per cent, and

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incidences of malaria, typhoid and other diseases were increasing. Fuel shortages made the distribution of goods difficult, and food supplies were short in urban areas.

Enforcement of Security Council sanctions against Haiti was being tightened, the Secretary-General said. France would suspend commercial flights to and from the country from 1 August, and up to 88 observers would soon be deployed in the Dominican Republic to monitor the border with Haiti, he noted.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi has written to Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic requesting a meeting amid growing tension in Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to a United Nations spokesman. A United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) convoy was hit by small-arms fire from Bosnian Serb positions outside Sarajevo today, leaving two British soldiers wounded and a fuel truck destroyed. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) responded to a request for a "show of force," but close air support was not required. Meanwhile, UNPROFOR closed the Butmir road after the Bosnian Serbs said they could no longer ensure the safety of vehicles travelling on it.

The spokesman said the number of cease-fire violations in Bosnia and Herzegovina had increased in the last 24 hours, while sniper fire had intensified in Sarajevo. Also today, two United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) employees and a Muslim woman they were escorting to Gorazde were detained by Bosnian Serbs. The UNHCR employees were told they could go free if they left the woman behind, but declined to do so. It was hoped that that situation could soon be resolved.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has asked the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), James Gustave Speth, to assist him in ensuring policy coherence and enhancing coordination within the United Nations system. The Secretary-General also gave Mr. Speth overall responsibility for assisting him in improving the coordination of operational activities for development, including the strengthening of the resident coordinator system. The UNDP is the largest provider of grant technical assistance in the United Nations system.

The Secretary-General decided to take that action after closely following the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council at its current session, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General noted a strong emphasis on the need to make the United Nations more effective in the arenas of development and international economic cooperation, as well as for improved coordination at the field level. The Secretary-General was also concerned about strengthening linkages between emergency assistance, rehabilitation and long-term development.

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Kazakhstan has signed a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The agreement will permit the IAEA to verify that nuclear facilities and materials in the State will be used solely for peaceful purposes. The agreement will come into effect upon ratification by Kazakhstan.

The IAEA said its inspectors would regularly visit nuclear facilities in Kazakhstan to verify records on the whereabouts of nuclear material, check instruments and surveillance equipment installed by the Agency, and confirm physical inventories of nuclear materials.

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